



meeting	County Council	
date	7 October 2004	agenda item number

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER

Purpose of Report

To outline key current themes and issues from the Deputy Leader's portfolio

Regeneration, Learning Skills & Employment

Safer Communities

Colleagues will be aware that Anti-Social Behaviour is a topic of particular interest and importance currently. To ensure corporate and co-ordinated response to this issue, we have established a County Council Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and Strategy Group, to work across our departments. We are also aiming to develop consistency of approach and service across the county from all agencies involved in anti-social behaviour issues; to this end, a multi-agency planning meeting was held on 6 October.

To ensure that colleagues are kept abreast of developments regarding community safety in the county, four scrutiny seminars regarding drug related issues will be held on 21 September 2004, 19 November 2004, 21 January 2005 and 14 March 2005.

Recent project allocations made from the community safety budget include

- £20,000 to support a major accident and injury Minimisation Programme for Schools targeting children between the ages of 10 and 11
- £15,000 for a range of work designed to reduce the incidence of domestic violence and increase and improve reporting measures. This will include multi agency domestic violence training, specific training for NCC employees, production of a young people's domestic violence information pack, promotion and advertising, and a contribution to "Impact", a project that aims to work with vulnerable young people to raise their awareness of domestic violence issues.

The Youth Offending Service has launched a new Youth Inclusion and Support Programme (YISP) in Kirkby. This scheme was established following a successful bid into the Kirkby Neighbourhood Management Project and joins other YISPs within

the county which are currently funded by the Children's Fund. The scheme is based at the Coxsmoor Community Centre and is already taking referrals in relation to eight to twelve years olds whose behaviour is of concern to the community. The major focus of a YISP is to divert young people away from crime and to link young people back into education and provide them with appropriate leisure facilities. Young people also have the opportunity to benefit from a mentor from the local community. The scheme is wholly managed by the Youth Offending Service.

Two new schemes to assist parents are also in the process of being launched. The Parenting group based at the Hawtonville Community Centre launched its Skills programme on 15 September while the scheme based at St Peter's Church Hall in Mansfield commenced on 28 September. Referrals have already been received from Social Services and a variety of schools for both of these programmes. Officers within the Youth Offending Service are confident that parents will benefit from attending these programmes and that they will equip parents to deal with the challenges of raising adolescents and teenagers. We also hope that the young people's behaviour will improve outside the home and assist in the reduction of offending and wider anti social behaviour.

Drugs Scrutiny Seminars

On Tuesday 21st September the first of 4 Drugs Scrutiny Seminars, chaired by Cllr Bosnjak, took place at the Forest ground. The seminars are approaching four key areas of drug work from a scrutiny perspective. Participants include County and district/borough councils, the Court service, police, health and voluntary sector.

The four seminars focus on:

- the Criminal Justice Intervention Programme and Sherwood Project which target prolific offenders and offers a choice of treatment or a swift return to custody;
- the role of the Courts, Prison, Probation and Youth Services;
- the involvement of Health with particular reference to mental health issues;
- the key role of the Voluntary Sector in delivering drug related services

Using a scrutiny approach to the drugs issues in Nottinghamshire will encourage participants to ask the questions – are we making a difference and what more can we do?

Community Protection

Emergency Planning

Unusually heavy rainfall in August led to incidents of localised flash flooding throughout Nottinghamshire. The Newark area was particularly badly affected, and parts of Retford also suffered significant flooding. The overall multi-agency response to these incidents proved speedy and effective, and earned praise from many victims. The County Council's immediate response involved staff of Culture & Community, Social Services, Environment and Education Departments.

A particularly notable incident occurred in Newark when flooding affected a rally of 3,500 young Christians camping at Newark Showground. During the evening of 9th August,

1,500 young people were evacuated from the Showground into Rest Centres established at The Grove Leisure Centre, Grove School, Southwell Leisure Centre and the Minster School. The use of Emergency Plans provided transportation, accommodation, food and comfort for the victims, and returned them safely to Newark the following day to enable them to continue their rally.

Elsewhere, flooding at Jericho Road, Balderton, Yorke Road, Newark and parts of Retford inundated a number of homes and raised public concern over the ability of drainage systems to cope with heavy rainfall.

Emergency Plans were again called into action later in August in response to a major fire at the Pyramid Plastics factory in Mansfield. This incident led to the evacuation of local residents, many of whom went to stay with friends and relatives locally, while around 70 people were cared for at an emergency Rest Centre established at Mansfield Leisure Centre.

During this period the Civil Contingencies Bill has continued on course through parliamentary process and remains on track to gain Royal Assent in the autumn and to come into effect from Spring 2005. The Bill will set out a new framework for civil protection work at the local level. The key implications for the County Council relate to new burdens arising from the legislation and the funding of emergency planning.

Registration Service

The County Council's Registration Service has continued in its planning for forthcoming major changes to the services being brought forward by the government. During November this year the General Register Office will be conducting a second six-monthly status review of our preparedness for the modernisation of the service. The first review indicates that Nottinghamshire County Council was then at an "Early planning stage".

Since the beginning of the year the Registration Services has introduced the new Citizenship Ceremonies. To date more than 70 new citizens have been welcomed to citizenship in Nottinghamshire. Group ceremonies, for ten applicants at a time, are now normally staged at a rate of two each month.

Trading Standards Service

Electric Blanket Testing

In partnership with the Fire and Rescue Service our Trading Standards Safety Team have undertaken 3 days of product testing on the safety of electric blankets in use by consumers. Testing was carried out at Beeston, Mansfield and Retford Fire Stations. In total 119 blankets were tested with 55 faulty; of those 8 had minor faults which were rectified on the spot. However, the remainder were withdrawn from use.

Underage Sales of Alcohol

Our Trading Standards Service participated in the national blitz on underage sales of Alcohol. This exercise formed part of the Home Office Alcohol Misuse Enforcement Campaign. Nationally Police and Trading Standards visited over 30,500 premises covering both on and off sales. In Nottinghamshire efforts were targeted on the Mansfield area with Trading Standards concentrating on Off Sales. Our figures showed just under 10% of off licenses sold to under 18's. The national figure was 32%.

Trading Standards involvement in this campaign has been supported by the LGA Safer Communities Board who recognise their front line role in protecting young people from acquiring a range of age restricted products.

The Home Secretary has also written to the Chief Executive thanking us for our hard work and recognising the commitment of the Trading Standards Service without which the exercise could not have been such a success.

Fireworks

Our Firework Campaign for 2004 will be launched on 11 October. This year it is a joint campaign with the City of Nottingham, Police and Fire and Rescue. The theme of the campaign is to encourage people to use fireworks safely and considerately and to promote responsible retailers through a "Good Guy" scheme.

Weight Restricted Roads

Following the authorisation of the Trading Standards Service under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 the Service carried out an exercise in Bingham to see if the vehicle weight limit of 7.5 tonnes was being adhered to on Tythby Road. The drivers of two vehicles, one vehicle being in excess of 25 tonnes and one in excess of 11 tonnes, have since been prosecuted and each fined £200 and ordered to pay £80 costs. Further exercises are planned on roads where weight restrictions apply.

Animal Health and Welfare

Our activities under the Animal Health and Welfare Framework continue to attract financial support in direct claims from DEFRA. This additional funding, through whatever stream, is crucial to maintaining standards of animal health and welfare in the county and helping to maintain our rural economy.

Doorstep Selling

Our input into the national initiative on Doorstep Cold Calling continues to make progress and attract media coverage with the CHAD being the latest paper to join the campaign. Support is also ongoing from financial institutions in the County to help vulnerable consumers who may seek to withdraw substantial amounts of cash under duress.

Consumer Direct

I will be participating for EMCOTS Ltd in the selection of a regional host to develop and run Consumer Direct: East Midlands. The call centre is planned to go live in mid 2005.

Counterfeit Goods: Sunday Markets

Trading Standards continue to be innovative in the way they tackle the problem of counterfeit goods at Sunday Markets. A recent 5.00 a.m. start with support from the Police saw vehicles stopped and goods seized prior to arriving at market. Stopped vehicles were also check weighed which resulted in some overloads being detected! Prosecutions are being considered.

National Consumer Week

Once again our Trading Standards Service will be active participating in national Consumer Week which starts on 18 October. The theme this year is Scams where we will be attempting to promote awareness of potential "rip offs" and how to avoid them.

Exam Successes

Pleasingly three Officers have recently had successful results in the Diploma in Consumer Affairs examinations. As part of our response to the recruitment and retention crisis it is important we continue to invest in our people to enable them to effectively fulfil their roles.

Cllr David Kirkham
Deputy Leader